

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 2115

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG

SUBJECT: CALL ON HAFEZ GHANEM, SECRETARY GENERAL, ASU

1. ON JULY 11 I CALLED ON HAFEZ GHANEM, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ARAB SOCIALIST UNION, FOR A GENERAL TOUR D'HORIZON. MOST OF THE DISCUSSION WAS DEVOTED TO A REVIEW OF OUR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS ON HOW WE SHOULD PROCEED TO ACHIEVE A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. I INSISTED THAT SOME SORT OF NEGOTIATING PROCESS HAD TO BE INITIATED BEFORE THE USG COULD PLAY A USEFUL ROLE, WHILE GHANEM MAINTAINED THAT SOME CLARIFICATION OF THE GOALS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WAS NECESSARY BEFORE EGYPT COULD ENTER A STAGE OF BARGAINING WITH ISRAEL. GHANEM SAID THAT GOE DID NOT EXPECT TO ACHIEVE VERY MUCH AT THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL BUT EGYPTIANS DID HOPE FOR SOME CLARIFICATION OF THE GENERAL OUTLINES OF A PEACE SETTLEMENT. HE SAID THAT ZAYYA WOULD BE FLEXIBLE IN CONSIDERING NEW IDEAS BUT WOULD INSIST ON EGYPT'S BASIC POSITIONS.

2. AT ONE POINT GHANEM OBSERVED THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF EGYPT HAS BEEN WORKING TO PROTECT AMERICAN INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST CONTRARY TO THE DESIRES OF SOME ARABS. HE SAID THAT GOE DID THIS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN SOME

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BALANCE. HE ALSO SAID THAT HAFEZ ISMAIL'S VISIT TO THE

SOVIET UNION ON JULY 12 WAS AT THE INVITATION OF THE SOVIET UNION AND WAS PRIMARILY FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING A FULL BRIEFING ON THE NIXON-BREZHNEV TALKS. (IN A SEPARATE CONVERSATION, ASHRAF GHORBAL TOLD ME THAT ISMAIL WOULD RETURN TO CAIRO ON JULY 14.) GHANEM SAID THAT ONE OF EGYPT'S GOALS IS TO CONVINCE BOTH THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES TO GIVE A HIGHER PRIORITY TO THE MIDDLE EAST, BUT HE DENIED THAT EGYPT HAD EVER PLANNED TO INVOLVE THE TWO IN A CONFLICT SITUATION IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL.

3. ON THE QUESTION OF LIBYAN-EGYPTIAN MERGER, GHANEM PLAYED DOWN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CURRENT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN QADHAAFI'S APPROACH TO UNION AND SADAT'S. HE THOUGHT THAT THE UNION WOULD COME ABOUT IN A STEP BY STEP PROCESS AND THIS APPROACH WOULD ULTIMATELY BE ACCEPTED BY THE LIBYANS. GHANEM ALSO POINTED OUT THAT EGYPT HAS NO NEED FOR A LIBYAN TYPE CULTURAL REVOLUTION SINCE THE ASU ALREADY HAS COMMITTEES IN ALL INSTITUTIONS, AND THESE COMMITTEES HAVE A ROLE IN THE FORMULATION OF POLICY. UNLIKE THE LIBYAN COMMITTEES, HOWEVER, THE ASU COMMITTEES WORK IN ACCORDANCE WITH LAW AND ACCEPTED PROCEDURES.

4. COMMENT: GHANEM IMPRESSED ME AS A SHREWD AND SOPHISTICATED MAN. HE LISTENED CAREFULLY TO MY STATEMENTS ABOUT THE NECESSITY OF INITIATING A NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND, UNLIKE SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES, DID NOT SEEM TO REJECT THEM OUT OF HAND. HIS REPLIES, HOWEVER, CLOSELY FOLLOWED THE STANDARD EGYPTIAN POSITION. WILEY

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